Listing of Claims:

This Listing of Claims replaces all previous versions of the claims.

1.   (Currently Amended) A method ~~for providing a graphical chat user interface on a display associated with a multimedia apparatus~~, comprising ~~the steps of~~:

receiving a broadcast video signal <u>at a first multimedia apparatus</u>;

receiving text communications from ~~at least one other television viewer~~ <u>a second multimedia apparatus</u>;

displaying <u>television programming of</u> said broadcast video signal in a first display area ~~on said~~<u>of a</u> display;

determining ~~the identity~~<u>a theme</u> of the television programming ~~displayed in said first display area~~;

~~determining the theme of said television programming identity~~;

selecting a background image ~~from an image database, said background image matching~~ <u>based on</u> said theme;

~~inserting~~<u>displaying</u> said background image as a background in a second display area ~~on~~<u>of</u> said display, <u>said displayed background image having a plurality of displayed graphical elements</u>; and

superimposing <u>text of</u> said text communications on top of <u>at least one of the displayed graphical elements of</u> said background ~~image~~ in said second display area.

2.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

selecting ~~at least one~~<u>an</u> avatar image ~~from said image database, said at least one avatar image being~~<u>that is</u> representative of ~~one of said other~~ <u>a</u> television ~~viewers~~<u>viewer of the second multimedia apparatus</u>; and

displaying<u>, simultaneously with said text,</u> said ~~at least one~~ avatar image superimposed on top of said background ~~image~~ in said second display area.

3.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~the steps of~~ selecting ~~a~~ the background image ~~from an image database, said background image matching said theme~~ and ~~inserting~~ displaying said background image ~~as a background in a second display area on said display~~ are both performed at least two times during the broadcast of said television programming.

4.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein selecting includes selecting said background image from an ~~said~~ image database ~~is~~ residing in a memory device associated with said first multimedia apparatus.

5.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein selecting includes selecting said background image from an ~~said~~ image database ~~is~~ residing on the Internet.

6.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising ~~the step of:~~ downloading ~~said~~ an image database via ~~the~~ a multiplexed broadcast stream containing said broadcast video signal, wherein selecting includes selecting said background image from said image database.

7.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein displaying said text ~~communications received from said one of said other television viewers is~~ includes displaying said text to be superimposed on top of said background ~~image~~ in said second display area close to ~~the displayed~~ said ~~at least one~~ avatar image.

8.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7, wherein said text ~~communications received from said one of said other television viewers~~ remains displayed superimposed on top of said background ~~image in said second display area~~ close to ~~the displayed~~ said ~~at least one~~ avatar image until another text communications is received from said ~~one of said other~~ television ~~viewers~~ viewer.

9.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2, further comprising ~~the steps of:~~

receiving ~~at the first multimedia apparatus~~ an ~~indication of an~~ action input ~~from at least one television viewer to the second multimedia apparatus associated with one avatar image currently displayed in said second display area~~;

~~in response to the indication,~~ selecting ~~at least one~~an action image ~~from said image database, said at least one action image~~ corresponding to said action input; and

displaying said ~~at least one~~ action image superimposed on top of said background ~~image~~ in said second display area.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

receiving an ~~indication of an~~ action input ~~from at least one television viewer to the second multimedia apparatus associated with one avatar image currently displayed in said second display area~~;

~~in response to the indication,~~ selecting ~~at least one~~ an action image ~~from said image database, said at least one action image~~ corresponding to said action input; and

displaying said ~~at least one~~ action image superimposed on top of said television programming in said first display area.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10, wherein ~~the at least one~~displaying said action image ~~is~~includes transparently ~~superimposed~~superimposing said action image over said television programming.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

creating ~~at least one~~a record associated with said first multimedia apparatus, said ~~at least one~~record comprising a ~~list~~set of preferred ~~other~~ television viewers; and

superimposing representations of text communications associated with at least one of the preferred television viewers included in said record,~~and~~ displaying at least one avatar image associated with said at least one ~~other~~of the preferred television ~~viewer~~viewers included in said record, ~~and~~superimposing text communications associated with at least one other television viewer not included in said record, and displaying at least one avatar image associated with said at least one other television viewer not included in said record.

13.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 12, wherein said at least one other television viewer not included in said record is watching television programming ~~determined to have the same television programming identity as the television programming displayed in said first display area~~that is the same as said television programming included in the broadcast video signal.

14.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 12, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

receiving ~~a change~~a user input ~~from the television viewer associated with~~ at said first multimedia apparatus;

in response to the user input, replacing the avatar image ~~of at least one other television viewer with an avatar image of at least one other television viewer based on said change input~~ with a different avatar image.

15.   (Currently Amended) ~~A multimedia~~An apparatus, comprising:

~~a~~first receiving means for receiving a broadcast video signal including television programming;

~~a~~second receiving means for receiving text communications originating from a plurality of multimedia apparatuses, and for receiving a plurality of images;

~~a memory~~storage means for storing said plurality of images;

~~a~~determination means for determining ~~the identity of the television programming tuned to by said first receiving means, and for determining~~ the a theme of said television programming ~~identity~~ and for selecting one of the images stored by the storage means based on the theme; and

~~a~~display means for displaying video of said broadcast video signal in a first display area, for displaying ~~a background image, retrieved~~the selected image ~~from said memory means and matching said theme,~~ in a second display area, wherein the selected image includes a plurality of displayed graphical elements, and for displaying text of said text communications superimposed on at least one of the displayed graphical elements of said ~~background~~selected image ~~in said second display area~~.

16.   (Currently Amended)   The ~~multimedia~~ apparatus of claim 15, wherein said display means ~~also are arranged~~ is further for displaying a plurality of avatar images, retrieved from said ~~memory~~ storage means, ~~and~~ each avatar image corresponding to one of said plurality of multimedia apparatuses, superimposed on said ~~background~~ selected image in said second display area.

17.   (Currently Amended)   The ~~multimedia~~ apparatus of claim 16, wherein said second receiving means ~~also are arranged~~ is further for receiving an indication of an action input from one of said plurality of multimedia apparatuses associated with ~~an~~ one of the avatar ~~image~~ images currently displayed in said second display area, and said display means ~~also are~~ ~~arranged~~ is further for displaying an action image, retrieved from said ~~memory~~ storage means and corresponding to ~~the character of~~ said action input, superimposed on said ~~background~~ selected image in said second display area.

18.   (Original)   A ~~computer program product, disposed on a~~ computer readable storage medium, ~~comprising~~ storing computer readable program code ~~means for causing~~ configured to cause a computer to perform the method of claim 1.

Claims 19-23 (Canceled).

24.   (New) An apparatus, comprising:

a receiver configured to receive a broadcast video signal and text communications;

a display; and

a processor coupled to the receiver and the display, the processor configured to:

display a video of the broadcast video signal in a first display area of the display,

determine a theme of television programming included in the broadcast video signal,

select a background image based on the theme;

display the background image as a background in a second display area of the display, wherein the background image includes a displayed graphical element, and

superimpose text of the text communications on top of the displayed graphical element of the background.

25.   (New) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein the processor is further configured to:

select an avatar image that is representative of a television viewer of a different multimedia apparatus; and

display simultaneously with the text, the avatar image superimposed on top of the background in the second display area.

26.   (New) The apparatus of claim 24, further comprising a storage device coupled to the processor, wherein the processor is configured to select the background image from a plurality of background images stored by the storage device.

27.   (New) The method of claim 24, further including a network interface coupled to the processor and to a network configured to store a plurality of background images, wherein the processor is configured to select the background image from the plurality of background images stored by the network.

28.   (New) The method of claim 24, wherein the processor is further configured to download an image database via the receiver from a multiplexed broadcast stream containing the broadcast video signal, and to select the background image from the image database.

29.   (New) A method, comprising:

displaying television programming included in a received broadcast video signal;

displaying, simultaneously with the television programming, a background based on the television programming, wherein the background includes a displayed graphical element; and

superimposing text of text communications with another user on top of the displayed graphical element of the background.

30.   (New) The method of claim 29, further comprising determining the background from a plurality of stored backgrounds based on a theme of the television programming.

31.   (New) The method of claim 29, wherein displaying the television programming comprises displaying the television programming in a first area of a display, and displaying the background comprises displaying the background in a different second area of the display.

32.   (New) The method of claim 29, further comprising:

receiving the text communications from a network; and

displaying simultaneously a plurality of avatar images superimposed on the background, each avatar image representing a different user of the network.

33.   (New) An apparatus, comprising:

a receiver configured to receive a broadcast video signal including television programming;

a display; and

a processor coupled to the receiver and the display, and configured to:

display the television programming,

display, simultaneously with the television programming, a background based on the television programming including a displayed graphical element, and

superimpose text of text communications with another user on top of the displayed graphical element of the background.

34.   (New) The apparatus of claim 33, further comprising a storage device coupled to the processor, the storage device configured to store a plurality of backgrounds, wherein the processor is further configured to determine the background from the plurality of backgrounds based on a theme of the television programming.

35.   (New) The apparatus of claim 33, wherein the processor is further configured to display the television programming in a first area of the display, and to display the background in a different second area of the display.

36.   (New) The apparatus of claim 33, further comprising a network interface coupled to the processor and configured to receive the text communications, wherein the processor is further configured to display simultaneously a plurality of avatar images superimposed on the background, each avatar image representing a different user of the network.